

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 01731 051512Z

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 IO-06 ACDA-10 L-01 /054 W

-----051522Z 068289 /47

R 041015Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4105

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1731

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCON, SENV, PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH-INDIAN TALKS MAY RESUME APRIL 14

1. FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN TOLD ME APRIL 4 THAT INDIA HAD PROPOSED RESUMING BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE FARAKKA PROBLEM IN DACCA THE MIDDLE OF THIS MONTH, PROBABLY 14. TABARAK SAID THE BDG WAS ENCOURAGED AT THIS INITIATIVE FROM NEW DELHI BUT DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THIS PORTENDED A NEW OFFER FROM THE GOI. BANGLADESH ALSO DID NOT KNOW WHO WOULD HEAD THE GOI TEAM. THEY WOULD BE ENCOURAGED IF IT WERE JAGJIVAN RAM SINCE HE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE WATER PROBLEM AND SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES BANGLADESH FACED. WHOEVER HEADED THE DELEGATION, HUSAIN SAID BANGLADESH WOULD APPROACH THESE DISCUSSIONS IN A COOPERATIVE SPIRIT AND WOULD SINCERELY TRY TO REACH AGREEMENT. HE FELT THAT A FAILURE AT THE OUTSET OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN NEW DELHI WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE FOR BOTH COUNTRIES.

2. TABARAK SAID THAT FARAKKA WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR BANGLADESH, BUT THIS WAS ONE ON WHICH BOTH SIDES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DACCA 01731 051512Z

WOULD HAVE TO GIVE SINCE THERE WAS JUST NOT ENOUGH WATER FOR INDIA AND BANGLADESH. THE BANGLADESH MILITARY, HOWEVER, ATTACHED EVEN GREATER IMPORTANCE TO ANOTHER PROBLEM-- THE BORDER SITUATION. TABARAK FELT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOME REDUCTION IN CROSS BORDER ACTIVITIES SINCE THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT TOOK OFFICE, BUT HE NOTED THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO BE

CERTAIN. IN ANY EVENT, INCURSIONS WERE CONTINUING AND BANGLADESHI WERE BEING KILLED. BANGLADESH BELIEVES IT MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT DISCONTINUE ALL SUPPORT THROUGH ANY CHANNEL TO THESE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS, AND THAT IT WORK WITH BANGLADESH TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY ALONG THE BORDER.

3. TABARAK ASKED FOR OUR VIEWS ON THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD BANGLADESH. I SAID THAT WHILE THERE HAD BEEN SOME ENCOURAGING STATEMENTS FROM NEW DELHI ABOUT THE NEED TO IMPROVE INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, I COULD NOT SPECULATE ON WHAT INDIA'S ATTITUDE MIGHT BE SINCE, FIRST, I DID NOT KNOW AND, SECONDLY, AS TABARAK WAS AWARE, WE DID NOT WANT IN ANY WAY TO GET IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. THIS WAS SOMETHING WHICH BANGLADESH AND INDIA HAD TO WORK OUT AND I WAS SURE BANGLADESH HAD ITS OWN WAYS OF ASSESSING INDIAN ATTITUDES.

4. TABARAK ACCEPTED THIS AND SAID THAT FOR THIS VERY REASON GENERAL ZIA HAD ASKED HIM THIS PAST WEEK TO ACCOMPANY PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER SHAMSUL HAQ TO THE NONALIGNED BUREAU MEETING IN NEW DELHI STARTING APRIL 6. HAQ (EQUIVALENT OF A CABINET MINISTER) AND TABARAK HUSAIN LEAVE APRIL 5 AND TABARAK SAID HE HAD ALREADY REQUESTED THROUGH THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER HERE THAT COUNTRY CALLS BE ARRANGED FOR HAQ ON THE APPROPRIATE INDIAN OFFICIALS BEFORE THE NONALIGNED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DACCA 01731 051512Z

MEETING OPENED. THIS, TABARAK SAID, WOULD GIVE THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION A BETTER FEEL FOR INDIAN ATTITUDES ON BILATERAL RELATIONS.

5. CONCLUDING THE DISCUSSION, TABARAK SAID IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL IF DISINTERESTED PARTIES FRIENDLY TO BOTH INDIA AND BANGLADESH WOULD ENCOURAGE INDIA TO HELP RESOLVE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. I REITERATED OUR FIRM INTENTION NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN THESE BILATERAL PROBLEMS AND SAID ANY INTERVENTION BY US AT THIS POINT WOULD BE NEITHER POSSIBLE NOR PRODUCTIVE.

MASTERS

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